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Jonathan and Carl at the Battle of Maldon

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Jonathan and Carl at the Battle of Maldon

Four battles with the Vikings
on the coast that year.

Silently on the Blackwater came two or three thousand
to the Northey Island Causeway,
and the Essex men went out to fight them,
where the maps show mean high water.

And one March morning a millenium later
Jonathan and Carl went out to read "The Battle of Maldon"
in that place.

They looked out over the shire and
studied the ways,
for the number 75 via Colchester Zoo does not run on Sundays.
And for this they cursed Regal Busways.
Of Chelmsford.

Only God knows
what the milita saw as they allowed the enemy to crowd closer.
Their leader so sure of his manhood that
he gave them a foothold on the narrow beach.
He showed them how to hold a weapon, weight a spear:
so they fought.
"Thought the harder, heart the keener, courage the greater as our strength faileth."
But the chief was already dead.
And the poet says "Only God knows who at the end shall possess this fight's field."

And Joanathan took Carl by the hand
past the football ground,
down South House Chase
to Furthersea Field.

And Jonathan began to read as they looked over
the causeway to Long Marsh.

But Carl proved soft for the coming battle, and at line 98
in which the Northmen cross the shining water shore,
said firmly "I need to pee".

And Jonathan kept on: "Thought the harder, heart the keener..."

But Carl, like Ethelred, was unready, and would have paid Danegeld
for the onslaught to stop.

And he said "I'm busting".

And Jonathan closed the book with a slap and said
"Christ, Carl, it's not always about your cock!"

Who at the end can possess the fight's field?

The surface needs to be broken before
we can tell the full tale:

between the centre circle and the changing names
might be more stories than a plough can find.

The battle left no trace
of young men finding their death on the Blackwater,
or of the pages flapping
back in the wind to a world when
love between them needs
great courage and a heart that is keen.